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AUTHOR	Greenberg, Arthur R.
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ABSTRACT

This brief report summarizes a monograph of the same title. Evidence of increasing interest in high school-college partnerships is presented. Among the reasons cited for renewed interest are: changing student population, students' frequent lack of skills preparedness, and the awareness of a need for new models of inservice staff development for high school teachers. It is further noted that although some differences still exist between high school and college cultures, these differences can be overcome through appropriate planning and sensitivity to divergent, as well as congruent, institutional goals and cultures. Examples of forms that partnerships take include concurrent-enrollment models; enrichment, compensatory, and motivational designs; teacher-to-teacher education; mentoring/tutoring models; and school improvement and restructuring efforts. The five key recommendations for developing high school-college partnerships listed are: (1) identify the student population and program goals; (2) contact local high schools and school districts; (3) determine costs; (4) develop community support; and (5) evaluate for program improvement. It is suggested that there is need for more research in three major areas: descriptive; procedural analysis; and outcomes analysis. (GLR)

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Awareness of high school-college partnerships has increased, especially in the higher education community, as evidenced by increased numbers of partnerships, legislative activity, publications, news reports, foundation and agency support, and conferences and panels devoted to the subject. While the roots of the (often strained) relationships between high schools and colleges go back two centuries or more, the closer collaboration required for successful partnerships is a relatively recent phenomenon.

What Accounts for the Interest in High School-College Partnerships?

Many factors explain the burgeoning interest in collaboration including the changing student population, democratization of higher education admissions policies, students' frequent lack of skill preparedness, awareness of a need for new models of inservice staff development for high school teachers, and greater competition in college student recruitment. Additional factors include increased awareness of the need for enhanced articulation between levels of institutions by administrators, parents, and state education department officials, and an awareness that the challenges confronting contemporary secondary education—particularly for at-risk students, women, and minorities—require a community effort in which colleges have been asked to play a much larger role than previously reserved for them.

In the face of increased opportunities to consummate partnerships with school systems, higher education institutional decision makers must respond to several key questions including: What are our institutional motives? Can our expertise be transferred to elementary and secondary school settings? Which partnership form is the correct form for us? Is this an opportunistic involvement created by external pressures or inducements (such as grant opportunities), or are we seeking a longer term relationship with requisite resources identified to sustain the effort? Is the partnership consistent with our perceived institutional mission? Can our institution afford to risk failure?

Can High School-College Differences Be Overcome?

The movement toward partnerships has not been without its natural impediments. Practitioners and researchers have commented upon the differences in high school and college courses. These differences have evolved from disparities in institutional funding and resources, student bodies, teachers and teaching (including teaching load, student characteristics, source and availability of materials of instruction, academic freedom, salaries and vacations, teaching amenities, teaching qualifications, valuing performance, and rewards), faculty role in decision making, and institutional leadership style. These factors, combined with the historical separateness of our loosely coupled systems of secondary and postsecondary education, have led in their most benign form to a lack of mutual understanding. More invidious manifestations can result in an active distrust between high school and college faculty and administrators.

Fortunately, a growing body of collaborative experience demonstrates that these factors can be overcome with appropriate planning and sensitivity to divergent, as well as congruent, institutional goals and culture.

What Forms Do Partnerships Take?

Examples of high school-college partnerships include concurrent-enrollment models; enrichment, compensatory, and motivational designs; Academic Alliances and other teacher-to-teacher approaches; preservice teacher education; mentoring/tutoring models; and school improvement and restructuring efforts.

Concurrent enrollment models provide an opportunity for high school students to engage in college-level courses usually for simultaneous high school and college credit. Examples of the model include the College Board's Advanced Placement Program and Syracuse University's Project Advance, both designed to serve students who show well-above average academic ability; La Guardia Community College's Middle College High School, for students at risk; Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program, for students of all ability levels; and Virginia's Master Technician Program for technical students.

Other partnerships focus on enrichment, compensatory, and motivational concerns, often for students who are at risk (urban and rural poor, for example), underrepresented (women in science and minority group members), or traditionally not well served through conventional programs (such as gifted or talented students). Programs representative of these types include the University of California's MESA, Colorado Community College's Partners Program, and the Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University.

Academic Alliances and other kinds of teacher-to-teacher partnerships, through which high school and college faculty jointly discuss a variety of subject-area issues and concerns, also prevail. The Greater Boston Foreign Language Collaborative is an excellent example of the Academic Alliance movement. The National Writing Project, the Atlanta Public Schools project with the National Faculty, and the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute are other examples of teacher-to-teacher partnerships.

Other partnerships have developed in the areas of preservice teacher education (such as Cleveland State University's teacher training center); student mentoring/tutoring programs (for example, the University of Akron's Kenmore Project); and partnerships which have as their objective school improvement or restructuring (Mississippi's Project '95 and the College Board's EQ Models Program for School-College Collaboration).

What Issues and Actions Should an Institution Consider When Contemplating Involvement in Partnerships with High Schools?

Five steps are key to the development of any high school-college partnership:

- Identify the student population and program goals
- Contact local high schools and school districts
- Determine costs
- Develop community support
- Evaluate for program improvement

Because the field of high school-college partnerships still is actively developing, significant research issues remain to be addressed. These issues tend to fall into three major areas: descriptive, procedural analysis, and outcomes analysis.

Unless a sound sense of the realistic anticipated outcomes of high school-college partnerships can be established, their future viability cannot be assured; nor, perhaps, can they even appropriately be justified apart from the accounts of their many supporters.

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